

Funding for modernizing, renovating, or constructing school facilities in LA, MS, and AL
May 14, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) voted in support of legislation that will provide additional federal funding to Gulf Coast schools still recovering from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 2187) includes a provision authorizing \$600 million in federal funding for public schools that were damaged by the 2005 storms.

The grants will be distributed based on need to hurricane-damaged schools in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama for use in modernizing, renovating, repairing existing school facilities, or for constructing new buildings. Charter schools are also eligible for funding.

"Katrina and Rita caused serious damage to hundreds of schools across the Gulf Coast, and rebuilding has been a tedious and frustrating process for many," said Rep. Melancon.

"As schools have struggled to piece together insurance payments and federal recovery dollars, rebuilding projects have been stalled and delayed. Too many students are still trying to learn in trailers or other temporary facilities. This significant influx in federal recovery dollars will be a shot in the arm for schools across south Louisiana, ensuring that our children will soon have safe, modern buildings to learn in."

Under the bill, the Secretary of Education will determine and distribute the grants within 60 days after appropriations have been made. The funding will be spread out equally over six years - fiscal years 2010 through 2015 - with \$100 million authorized for appropriation in each of those years.

The funding for hurricane-damaged Gulf Coast schools was included in a broader education bill providing \$6.4 billion in fiscal year 2010 to upgrade school buildings to make them more energy efficient and more reliant on renewable sources of energy. Louisiana schools will receive an estimated \$129.1 million for these upgrades, in addition to the hurricane recovery funding. The bill also designates \$320 million nationwide for schools in areas that are in economic distress or recovering from a natural disaster.

The bill also generates long-term savings for schools by reducing energy expenses. Green schools reduce pollution by using about 30% less water and energy than conventional schools, and emit almost 40% less harmful carbon dioxide.

According to calculations by the Economic Policy Institute, this legislation's construction funding would support as many as 136,000 new jobs - many in areas that will give workers valuable skills.

"School buildings should be safe and healthy learning environments for children," said Rep. Melancon.

"But too many schools in south Louisiana and across the country lack the funding needed to bring them up to good condition. This boost in funding will assist schools in

modernizing and renovating their facilities, which will help improve student achievement by providing children and teachers with a modern, safe, and healthy place for learning."

Specifically, the 21st Century Green High-Performing Public School Facilities Act (H.R. 2187) will:

□□□□□□□□□□ Provide schools with access to funding for modernization, renovation and repair projects

- Authorizes \$6.4 billion for school facilities projects for fiscal year 2010, and ensures that school districts will quickly receive funds for school modernization, renovation, and repairs that create healthier, safer, and more energy-efficient teaching and learning climates.
- Allocates the same percentage of funds to school districts that they receive under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, except that it guarantees each such district a minimum of \$5,000.

Save money in the short-term and in the long-term through the use of energy-efficient building techniques

- The average national school construction cost is \$150 per square foot and building energy-efficiently adds only \$3 per square foot.
- In the short-term, energy-efficient schools have an average savings of \$96,760 per year.
- In the long-term savings from energy-efficient buildings are on average \$70 per square foot.
- An energy-efficient school typically utilizes 33 percent less energy and 32 percent less water.

Improve student achievement and increase teacher retention by providing more children and teachers with a modern, safe, clean and healthy place for learning.

- Research demonstrates that better school facilities result in improved student achievement and teacher recruitment and retention.
- Building quality affects the context for learning. Lighting, noise reduction, air quality and other factors affect student learning gains and behavior.
- The physical condition of schools affects teacher and principal recruitment and retention.
- Forty percent of teachers who transferred schools and thirty-nine percent who left teaching cited the need for significant school repairs as a source of their dissatisfaction.

- One-third of school principals cited at least one environmental factor as interfering with their ability to deliver instruction.

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